

Stone's Throw



Issue #3

December 2016

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"Change as Scorched Earth"

Contributing Poets

Chad Parenteau
Mignon Ariel King
Ryk McIntyre
Susan Deer Cloud
Tony Brown
Ron Goba

Edited by Chad Parenteau

Front Cover by James Conant, modified by Chad Parenteau

Back cover illustration by James Conant

Inquire about submissions to: chadpoetforhire@yahoo.com

See all *Stone's Throw* issues at www.chadparenteupoetforhire.com

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Introduction

My life has been filled with change over the last decade. The older I get, the more I realize this sentence isn't necessarily positive or negative.

Change is the one thing everyone wants until it comes. Change is something we try to see as positive. While it can start or end as something good, we often overlook the pain that can come before or after.

2016 was riddled with change.

In November, amidst delays in getting this issue out, people relearned another crucial lesson: Sometimes we avoid change because it's too hard. That's when other people enact change on us.

But that's probably something for the next issue of *Stone's Throw*, which I'm calling the Democracy Benefit issue.

Thanks to all the poets who took on the challenge to meet this issue's theme. Special thanks to Ron Goba, who contributed a poem in reaction to the first issue of *Stone's Throw*.

This issue is dedicated to James Conant, friend and artistic right hand man, who passed away last year.

—*Chad Parenteau*

Reunion

There's always a way back
so long as the salt
thrown down as you left

leaves enough footprints
from those who swear
they didn't throw you out,

no evidence
on the matchbook
by the seared scaffold.

Of course they meet you
right at the original
scene of judgement.

Better to proclaim
you haven't changed at all,
say you still belong.

There's some kind of noun
for you if you stay,
some kind of verb behind it.

Adjectives are muttered
just within earshot,
angry again.

Leave first, even if not told,
hosts with nothing to do
but make sure you're gone.

—*Chad Parenteau*

Transplantation

In Poe's tales, a woman has to be half
Or fully dead to earn lasting devotion.
As a teen, I dreamt of a high school boy
Driving just us two with the top down.
On a just-starting-to-mist-over evening,
He'd lean over to kiss me goodnight.

Too many girls were pretty, popular as
The clear-skinned smiles of Ian's song.
They all had boys' hearts if they wanted,
To scorch and toss back when they were
Done. I sat in the back rows punctuating
Poems with hearts pierced by fringed arrows.

Cutting doilies out of paper, I pretended into
College that my healthy human muscle was fine.
Now that I've rested here a long, unknown while
At 40, with tubes, needles, and sad-faced nurses--
Finally! A young gallant drove his convertible
In the rain. Now his sweet heart belongs to me.

—*Mignon Ariel King*

Crash and Burn Diner

Every heartbreak comes in here to get a cup of coffee.
They grab up loose sections of other peoples' newspapers
and pretend to read them. What's black and white and grey
all over? Heartbreak. I tell that joke all the time; it never fails
to fail to get a laugh. What do you expect? Heartbreaks have
no sense of humor. Though they do know some fine songs.

They play them on the jukebox every time. Every heartbreak
is its own textbook. Each one so hungry to be read they fall open
at the slightest kind remark. I say "Hey... how you doing?"
then sit back and watch them try and keep their faces fixed.
Then it's tear time and ... I listen to them. Someone has to
right? Shows how much I know about being mean to hearts

in distress. I sit and listen to what's-his-name, what's-her-name
what happened this time, or the one time heartbreaks talk about
over and over. I try to act surprised and interested. Mostly, I am.
I want them to get it out of their system. Maybe leave this place
and try again in the outside world. They offer to settle their tab
with their apologies. I tell them, "Stop selling your story short.

When love fucks you over & dumps you at the bus stop, it sucks
every time. In your case, you and a friend tried to make that thing
of yours something else. That can fail in one of three ways:
bad judgment, uncomfortable comedy, awkward breakfasts.
You traded in friendship for a car you didn't own long enough
to have faith in; not every friendship is going to be convertible.

Sometimes you can just U-turn it all around, get back to where
you were more comfortable. Me? I've never been good throwing
things into reverse on that drive. I'm more the crash-and-burn type.
Last time it happened, I decided to just open this roadside cafe
where the coffee is cheaper than heartache and twice as bitter.
You tired? I got beds in the back. Sleep. Dream of something else.

—Ryk McIntyre

What They No Longer Saw in the Catskills

When her grandma was born following the fin de siècle
the white-tailed deer were gone, although the family
dwelled on a mountain called White Roe. Disappeared

the old growth forest, chopped down for firewood,
furniture, and cabins. Hemlocks that once cast ghostly
green-blue across endless swells and rounded horizons

had been stripped for tannin to make beaver hats
for city gentlemen who preferred fashion to trees.
Passenger pigeons were extinct, but sometimes

someone spotted a black bear in a blackberry patch.
By the time she came along in 1950, so had DDT.
She never saw a great blue heron or bald eagle,

although the deer had been reintroduced, venison
a part of their wild meat meals along with trout,
rabbit, and ruffed grouse the natives called

partridge. A Dutch elm kept her company
outside her upstairs bedroom window,
branches bowing low like ballerinas

she dreamed of seeing. The disease hit
and her father had to chainsaw down
her dying friend. That winter they stared

into the fireplace, elm wood crumbling
in flames. The State deemed the Catskill panther
extinct, even though she heard one scream

behind the house. The Government lied
that non-treaty Indians were like all the other lives
disappeared, but her People were merely

incognito or blending in with the quiet places.
Once grown, she ran away to the big cities
and neon lights to see those ballerinas

and be with city men. Four decades later
she came back along with the great blue herons
and bald eagles – and, she hoped, the panthers.

—*Susan Deer Cloud*

Gravedancers' Ball

we all seem to have
a secret longing
to dance on someone's grave

love to sin
that light fantastic
we can't seem to sit still

red or blue
left or right
we love that happy dance

how soft and yielding
that refilled ground
how haughty our heels upon it

how good it feels to be swinging
above those
who can no longer do a thing to us

every bastard one of us
longing to abandon the better self and dance
spinning in delight for a moment anyway

dancing to the beautiful American word
revenge
stomping a toe dance of righteousness

everyone's tapping their feet
some on top now
some waiting their turn at the top

although
it makes no difference to the dead
whose graves we choose to tarantelle upon

as long as there is dancing
as long as nothing grows
where we stamp

—*Tony Brown*

Stone's Throw poem

Chaucer And out of
old books, in
good faith. come to
think of
it Zukofskys not in
TheNortonAnthologyOf
ModernPoetry 1998 (does
success need some
thing such as com
plete men
tal break
down) way
wards cultures morass
politics fruit
less prayers beasts
futile barter's HallMark's Access
handheldawl re
ducing abscesses impacts
basements bargains fails
failures labyrinths re
cess per
haps suicides yawp
in
ter
venes in
vents personal logos out
side place in
public (how
do knots open
make who
let go
of
it) Davenport calls Louis
poet's
poet's
poet (perhaps
it should be
whom) Eliot Immature poets imitate;
mature poets steal. what I write (who
couldn't guess this
would turn on
to
me) muffles past

baffles battles (who
lends love makers
loans) this
compels signs weeps signifier
widowers plainchant I miss Sue
miss Sue miss Sue (how
stupid is it
speak so cant
let go these strains against
for) that
career of
this
polysomic groove glove
heracliting exhorts excessiz express
sacred souls palpable spirit
unites vanish in
ourbed insomnias deep sleep
arterys murmurs ones capacious
crows nest cell I leopard spots nap
kins grizzly gimmez
gayish brown bears neeze
ache wssnout Donnes Compass (can
I wake love missing
may I may any
one) coops crocked cook
pro
duces un
embodys stew motley pots medley
ones breakplate recipe

---Ron Goba



James Conant, 1953-2015